XL. *Particulars of the Country of* Labradore, *extracted from the Papers of Lieutenant* Roger Curtis, *of His Majesty's Sloop the* Otter, *with a Plane-Chart of the Coaſt. Communicated by the Honourable* Daines Barrington.

Redde, Feb. 24, 1774.

THERE is no part of the Britiſh dominions ſo little known as the immenſe territory of LABRADORE. So few have viſited the northern parts of this vaſt country, that almoſt from the ſtreights of BELLEISLE, until you come to the entrance of HUDSON'S BAY, for more than ten degrees of latitude, no chart, which gave any tolerable idea of the coaſt, had hitherto been formed. The barrenneſs of the country explains why it has been ſo ſeldom frequented. Here avarice has but little to feed on.

Perhaps, without an immoderate ſhare of vanity, I may venture to preſume, that, as far as I have been, which is to the latitude of 59° 10′, the draught, which I have been able to form, is by much the beſt that has hitherto been made.

Others have gone before me, bleſt with abilities ſuperior to mine, and to whom I hope to be thought equal

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equal only in aſſiduity. But I had advantages of which they were deſtitute; with a ſmall veſſel, and having an Indian with me, who knew of every rock and ſhoal upon the coaſt, I was enabled to be accurate in my obſervations; and theſe are the reaſons, why I deem my own ſketch preferable to all others.

Of the COAST.

As this country is one of the moſt barren in the known world, ſo its ſea-coaſt is the moſt remarkable. Bordered by innumerable iſlands, and many of them being a conſiderable diſtance from the main land, a ſhip of burthen would ſail a great way along the coaſt, without being able to form any notion of its true ſituation.

Hence it is that all charts of it have been ſo extremely erroneous; and hence aroſe thoſe opinions, that ſome of the inlets extended a vaſt diſtance into the country, if not quite into the ſea of HUDSON'S BAY.

DAVIS'S INLET, which has been ſo much talked of, is not twenty leagues from the entrance of it to its extremity.

The navigation here is extremely hazardous. Towards the land, the ſea is covered with large bodies, and broken pieces, of ice; and the farther you go northward, the greater is the quantity you meet with.

Some of thoſe maſſes, which the ſeamen call iſlands of ice, are of a prodigious magnitude, and they are generally ſuppoſed to ſwim two thirds under water. You will frequently ſee them more than a hundred feet above the ſurface, and to ſhips in a ſtorm,

ſtorm, or in thick weather, nothing can be more terrible.

Thoſe prodigious pieces of ice come from the north, and are ſuppoſed to be formed by the freezing of cataracts upon the lands about EAST GREENLAND and the Pole. As ſoon as the ſeverity of the winter begins to abate, their immenſe weight breaks them from the ſhore, and they are driven to the ſouthward. To the miſerable inhabitants of LABRADORE, their appearance upon the coaſt ſerve as a token of the approach of ſummer.

Of the CLIMATE, SOIL, and NATURAL PRODUCTIONS of the country.

This vaſt tract of land is extremely barren, and altogether incapable of cultivation. The ſurface is everywhere uneven, and covered with large ſtones, ſome of which are of amazing dimenſions. There are few ſprings; yet, throughout the country, there are prodigious chains of lakes, or ponds, which are produced by the rains, and the melting of the ſnow. Theſe ponds abound in trout, but they are very ſmall.

There is no ſuch thing as level land. It is a country formed of frightful mountains, and unfruitful vallies. The mountains are almoſt devoid of every ſort of herbage. A blighted ſhrub, and a little moſs, is ſometimes to be ſeen upon them; but, in general, the bare rock is all you behold. The vallies are full of crooked low trees, ſuch as the different pines, ſpruce, birch, and a ſpecies of the cedar. Up ſome of the deep bays, and not far from the water, it is ſaid, however, there are a few ſticks of no inconſiderable

conſiderable ſize. In a word, the whole country is nothing more than a prodigious heap of barren rocks.

The climate is extremely rigorous. There is but little appearance of ſummer before the middle of July; and, in September, the approach of winter is very evident. It has been remarked, that the winters, within theſe few years, have been leſs ſevere than they were known heretofore. The cauſe of ſuch an alteration it would be difficult to diſcover.

All along the coaſt there are many rivers, which empty themſelves into the ſea; yet there are but few of any conſideration, and you muſt not imagine that the largeſt are any thing like what is generally underſtood by a river. Cuſtom has taught us to give them this appellation, but the moſt of them are nothing more than broad brooks, or rivulets. As they are only drains from the ponds, in dry weather they are everywhere fordable; for running upon a ſolid rock, they become broad, without having a bed any depth below the ſurface of the banks.

The ſuperficial appearance of this country is exceedingly unfavourable. What may be hidden in its bowels, we cannot pretend to ſuggeſt; probably it may produce ſome copper; the rocks, in many places, are impregnated with an ore of that reſemblance. Something of a horny ſubſtance, which is extremely tranſparent, and which will ſcale out into a multitude of ſmall ſheets, is often found amidſt the ſtones. There are both black and white of this ſort, but the black is the moſt rare. It has been tried in fire, but ſeemed to be no ways affected by heat.

The

The ſpecies of wood here are not very various: excepting a few ſhrubs, which have as yet received no name from the Europeans, the principal produce of the country is the different ſorts of SPRUCE and PINE. Of thoſe, even in the more ſouthern parts, there is not abundance; as you advance northwards, they gradually diminiſh, and by the time you arrive at the ſixtieth degree of latitude, the eye is not delighted with any ſort of herbage. Here the wretched reſidents build their miſerable habitations with the bones of whales. If ever they cheer their aching limbs with fire, they gather a few ſticks from the ſea-ſhore, which probably have been wafted from NORWAY, or from LAPLAND. Here a vaſt quantity of ſnow remains upon the land throughout the year.

Although the winter here is ſo exceſſively rigid, in ſummer the heat is ſometimes diſagreeable, and in that ſeaſon the weather is very moderate, and remarkably ſerene. It is but ſeldom foggy, ſpeaking comparatively between this and NEWFOUNDLAND; nor are you ſo frequently liable to thoſe deſtructive gales of wind, which viſit many other parts of the globe.

It is, in general, high land, and ſometimes you meet with mountains of an aſtoniſhing height; you are alſo frequently preſented with proſpects that are really awful, and extremely romantic.

There is no great variety of animals in this rocky country, nor are they at all numerous. Here are the REIN-DEER; the females have horns, which nature has given them to procure food, for with theſe they beat away the ſnow in winter, and, by that means, come at the tops of trees, which, during the inclemency of that ſeaſon, is their only ſuſtenance.

There are BEARS black and white, WOLVES, the CARKASHEW, FOXES, PORCUPINES a great many, the MOUNTAIN-CAT, MARTINS, BEAVERS, OTTERS, HARES, and a few ERMINE.

The female BEARS, eſpecially the white, in defence of their young, will attack any thing; but at other times, unleſs you wound them, it is ſaid they are not very dangerous. Many people affirm, and mention inſtances, that, being purſued by a bear, if you fall on your face, and remain immoveable, it will retire, without doing you any miſchief. A ſingle WOLF will never approach a man, nor need he be afraid of ſeveral attacking him together, unleſs in winter, when they are impelled to it by hunger.

A venomous reptile, or inſect, is not to be found here, except TOADS, and they are extremely rare. The whole country is filled with very ſmall flies, which are exceedingly tormenting.

Here are EAGLES, HAWKS, the HORN-OWL, and the RED-GAME, with a ſmaller ſort which reſemble them, called the SPRUCE-PARTRIDGE: theſe we may call the conſtant inhabitants of the feathered kind.

Of ſea-birds, there are great variety.

In the ſummer, the woods are viſited with many ſorts of little birds, and ſome of them are of beautiful plumage. They breed here, but, towards winter, they ſeek a happier climate.

In the autumn, there come a prodigious quantity of birds, which are called CURLEWS. They are about the ſize of a wood-cock, ſhaped like them, and nearly of the ſame colour; extremely fat, and moſt delicious eating. They continue here but a very

little while, nor is it known from whence they come, or whither they go.

It is a very remarkable phænomenon, that ſeveral beaſts, and ſome of the birds, change their colour with the ſeaſons. In the winter, your eye ſcarcely beholds any thing but what is white. In this miſerable climate, providence has armed moſt animals with a defence againſt the rigour of winter. The quadrupedes are cloathed with a longer thicker hair, or fur; to the birds are given ſoft down, and feathers of a cloſer contexture, than thoſe of milder countries.

The principal fiſh are WHALES, the COD-FISH, and SALMON. Of SHELL-FISH, there are but few ſorts, and theſe in no great plenty. LOBSTERS, there are none at all; which is very remarkable; for, at a particular part in the Streights of Belliſle, not more than five or ſix leagues from Newfoundland, there are great abundance.

Obſerving that the ſeal-darts of every Indian were headed with the teeth of the SEA-COW, I was led to inquire, how they came by them; and particularly, as upon theſe inſtruments they ſeemed to fix but little value. I was informed, that they purchaſed them from the Indians of Nuckvank, about the latitude 60°; and that thoſe Indians were viſited by multitudes of the ſea-cows, in the winter, and that they killed a vaſt number of them.

My Indian, of whom I obtained this knowledge, could not tell me where the ſea-cows went to in the ſummer, becauſe he had never been beyond Nuckvank; but he told me, that he had often heard the northern Indians ſay, that, a good way farther

farther to the north, they went aſhore upon iſlands, which was thought a very extraordinary thing.

If the ſituation of theſe iſlands was known, it is very probable, an extremely valuable ſea-cow fiſhery might be carried on there.

Of the INHABITANTS.

It is not ſurprizing, that ſuch a country as has been deſcribed ſhould be thinly inhabited. The human ſpecies upon this extenſive territory are but few; and ſuch as we know of are extremely ſavage. The populouſneſs of mankind generally bears an affinity to the ſoil they live on. Upon barren rocks, covered with ſnow for more than half the year, and where the winters are ſo rigorous, and of ſuch long continuance, we cannot expect to find the inhabitants ſo very numerous.

The people of this country form various nations or tribes; and are at perpetual war with each other. Formerly the ESQUIMAUX, who may be called a maritime nation, were ſettled at different places upon the ſea coaſt quite down to the river ST. JOHN'S; but, for many years paſt, whether it has been owing to their quarrels with the Mountaineers, or the incroachments of the Europeans, they have taken up their reſidence far to the north.

A good way up the country live a people diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of MOUNTAINEERS, between whom and the Eſquimaux there ſubſiſts an unconquerable averſion. Next to the Mountaineers, and ſtill farther weſtward, you come to a nation

called the ESCOPICS. We know not much of this people: and beyond them, are the Hudſon Bay Indians, with whom the world is but little better acquainted. There are, doubtleſs, in ſuch a vaſt tract of land, a great number of other nations; but of whom we have not the leaſt information.

We are ignorant as yet, why theſe poor people bear each other ſuch implacable hatred; but it ſeems a melancholy reflection, that, in ſo large a country, and withal ſo badly inhabited, the few there are ſhould be eternally ſolicitous to extirpate one another: though, perhaps, multiplying the ſpecies would augment the natural ſcarcity of proviſions, and only ſerve to render them all more miſerable.

The Mountaineers are eſteemed an induſtrious tribe; and, for many years, had been known to the French traders. Their chief employment is to catch fur, and procure the neceſſaries of life. They are extremely illiterate, but generally good-natured; and are reckoned to be leſs ferocious than any other of the Indians. This ſoftneſs of their manners is owing to their long intercourſe with Europeans; and the other nations will doubtleſs loſe their ſavage diſpoſition, in proportion as they imbibe our cuſtoms.

They come every year to trade with the Canadian merchants, who have ſeal-fiſheries on the ſouthern part of the coaſt, and have the character of juſt dealers. They are immoderately fond of ſpirits; for which, blanketing, fire-arms, (in the uſe of which they are remarkably dexterous), and ammunition, they truck the greateſt part of their furs.

Their canoes are covered with the rind of birch; and, though ſo light as to be eaſily carried, yet ſuffici-

ently large to contain a whole family and their traffic. By means of the multitude of amazing ponds throughout this country, they convey themſelves a vaſt diſtance in a very little time. Whenever they find a pond in their way, they embark on it, and travel by water; when its courſe alters, and by following it they would lengthen their diſtance any thing conſiderable, they land, place their canoe on their head, and carry their baggage on their ſhoulders, until other water gives them an opportunity of re-embarking. They are moſt excellent travellers. They bear inconceivable fatigue with aſtoniſhing patience, and will travel two days ſucceſſively without taking any ſort of nouriſhment.

Theſe Indians are of a deeper colour than the Eſquimaux. They are low of ſtature. Though of a robuſt conſtitution, their limbs are ſmall, and extremely well adapted to the rocky country they are continually traverſing. They have no hair, except on the head. For many years they have dreſſed their food, which they boil to a jelly; whereas the other Indians eat every thing raw. Their manner of feeding is certainly conducive to that hoſpitable diſpoſition, which they are ſaid to poſſeſs, and was doubtleſs originally a great cauſe of their civilization. Indeed the Eſquimaux begin to imitate us; but it is no more than a year or two, that the buſineſs of cookery has been known among them.

It is their cuſtom to deſtroy the aged and decrepid, when they become uſeleſs to the ſociety, and burthenſome to themſelves. They have been queſtioned of this ſeeming inhumanity; and perhaps their reaſons are not totally devoid of ſound philoſophy.

They

They tell you, that as it is with difficulty they procure the neceſſaries of life, they can admit of none, who do not contribute towards acquiring it; that having no fixed reſidence, and it being impoſſible to carry the helpleſs with them, as they are obliged to be continually traverſing the country; they aſk you, if it is not better to put an end to miſerable beings, than ſuffer them to periſh with cold and hunger? The ſon generally does this kind office for the father; and, it having ever been a practice among them, they wonder at our conſidering it as an act of inhumanity.

Of the ESQUIMAUX.

The ESQUIMAUX Indians, inhabiting the ſea-coaſt of the northern part of LABRADORE, are indiſputably from GREENLAND. They are a very deep tawney, or rather of a pale copper-coloured complexion. Conſidered altogether, they are inferior in ſize to the generality of Europeans; and but a few among them are of good ſtature. They bear a very near reſemblance to the LAPLANDERS, both in their perſons and cuſtoms. It is not inſinuated that they are a Lapland colony; but it is very probable, they came originally from Greenland. They have beards, ſo have the Greenlanders, and indeed ſo have the inhabitants of Lapland: whereas the Iroquois, the Hurons, the Eſcopics, and the Mountaineers their neighbours, have hair no where except on the head. It is true this is no proof. The Samojedes are no more hairy than the nations we have juſt mentioned; but

but who will believe that any part of the new world was peopled from Samojeda? All we know is, that the great Author of Nature has been pleaſed to diverſify the human ſpecies upon every continent.

Theſe Indians, in general, are not very diſagreeably featured, though there are ſome among them who are extremely ugly. They are flat-viſaged, and have ſhort noſes. Their hair is black and extremely coarſe. Their hands and feet are remarkably ſmall. The women load their heads with large ſtrings of beads, which they faſten to the hair above the ears; and they are fond of a hoop of bright braſs, which they wear as a coronet. Their dreſs is intirely of ſkins, except thoſe who have trafficked for a little blanketing. It conſiſts of a ſort of hooded cloſe ſhirt, breeches, ſtockings, and boots. They wear the hairy ſide towards them, according to the ſeaſons; and between the dreſs of the different ſexes there is no variety, except that the women wear monſtrous large boots, and their upper garment is ornamented with a tail. In the boots they occaſionally place their children; but the youngeſt is always carried at their back, in the hood of their jacket.

They have no ſort of bread; but live chiefly on the fleſh of ſeal, deer, fiſh, and of birds. Till very lately they ate every thing raw, and putrefaction was deemed no objection.

In the winter they live in houſes, or rather caverns, for they are ſunk in the earth. In the ſummer they dwell in tents, which are made circular with poles, and covered with ſkins ſewed together. The houſe conſiſts of one room, and though not

very large, yet it contains ſeveral brothers or other relations, with their wives and children. Their tents are ſtill more crouded; becauſe, as the whole ſummer they are generally rambling up and down the coaſt, they endeavour to diminiſh their baggage as much as poſſible.

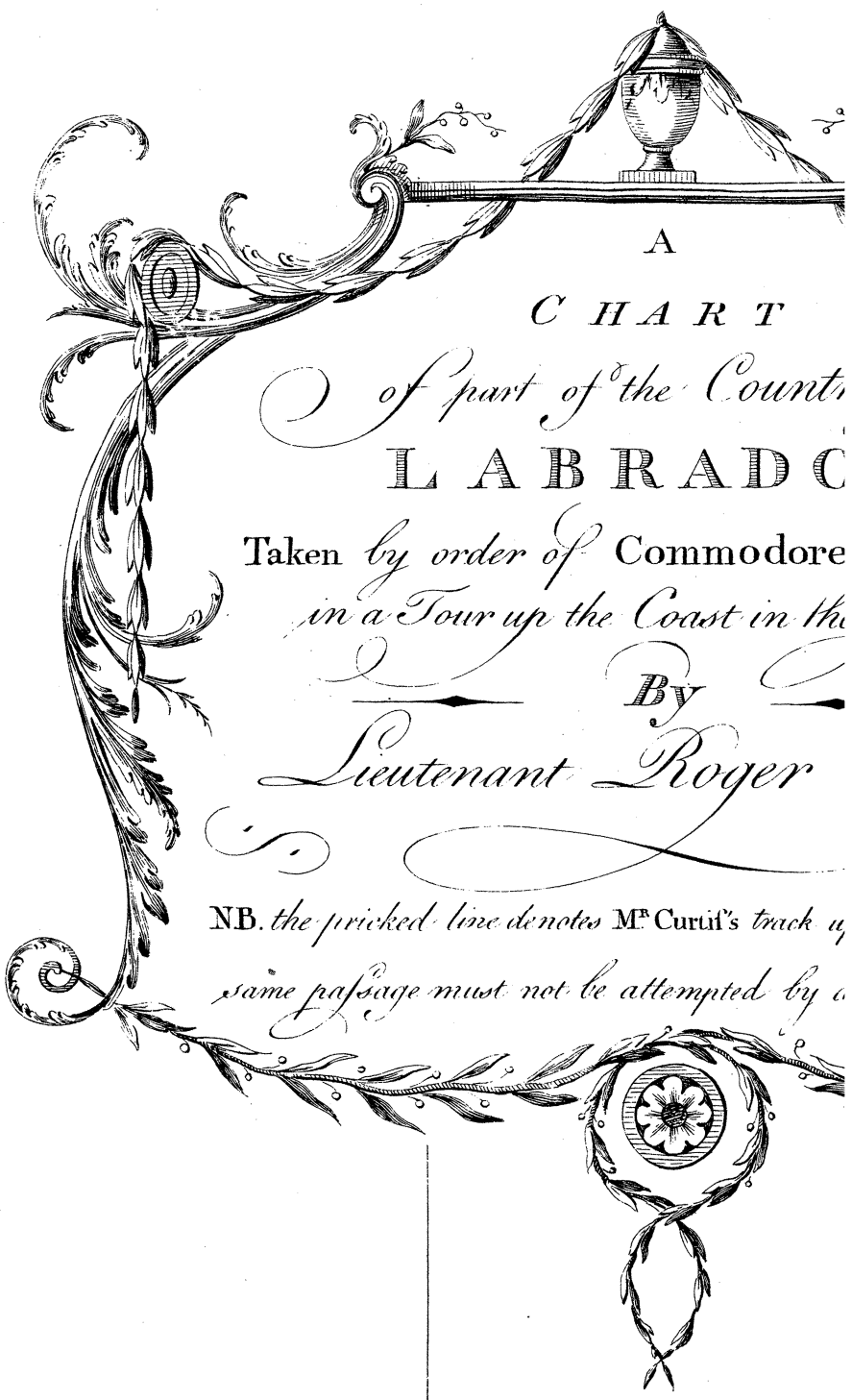
In the ſummer they find no difficulty in procuring food; but it is not ſo with them in winter, againſt which ſeaſon they dry fiſh in the ſun, and preſerve the fat or oil of ſeals in ſkin veſſels.

They have no ſort of beverage among them, except water. They are not as yet fond of ſpirituous liquors, and there are but few that will taſte of any. It is certain they are able to ſubſiſt a long while without eating; but when they have plenty, they devour a prodigious quantity. When they are preſſed with hunger, and have nothing to ſatisfy it, they make their noſes bleed, and ſuck the blood to ſupport themſelves.

They appear to be abſolutely without any ſort of religion; nor have they ſo much as an object of adoration among them. They live happy in their ignorance, and enjoy the bleſſing of being ſtrangers to perſecution and torture.

They are without any government; and no man is ſuperior to another, but as he excels in ſtrength or in courage, and in having the greateſt number of wives and children. Being entirely without laws, general cenſure is the only puniſhment for the moſt deteſtable crimes.

They have no marriage ceremony. A wife is conſidered as property, and a huſband lends one of his wives to to a friend. The wives are given very early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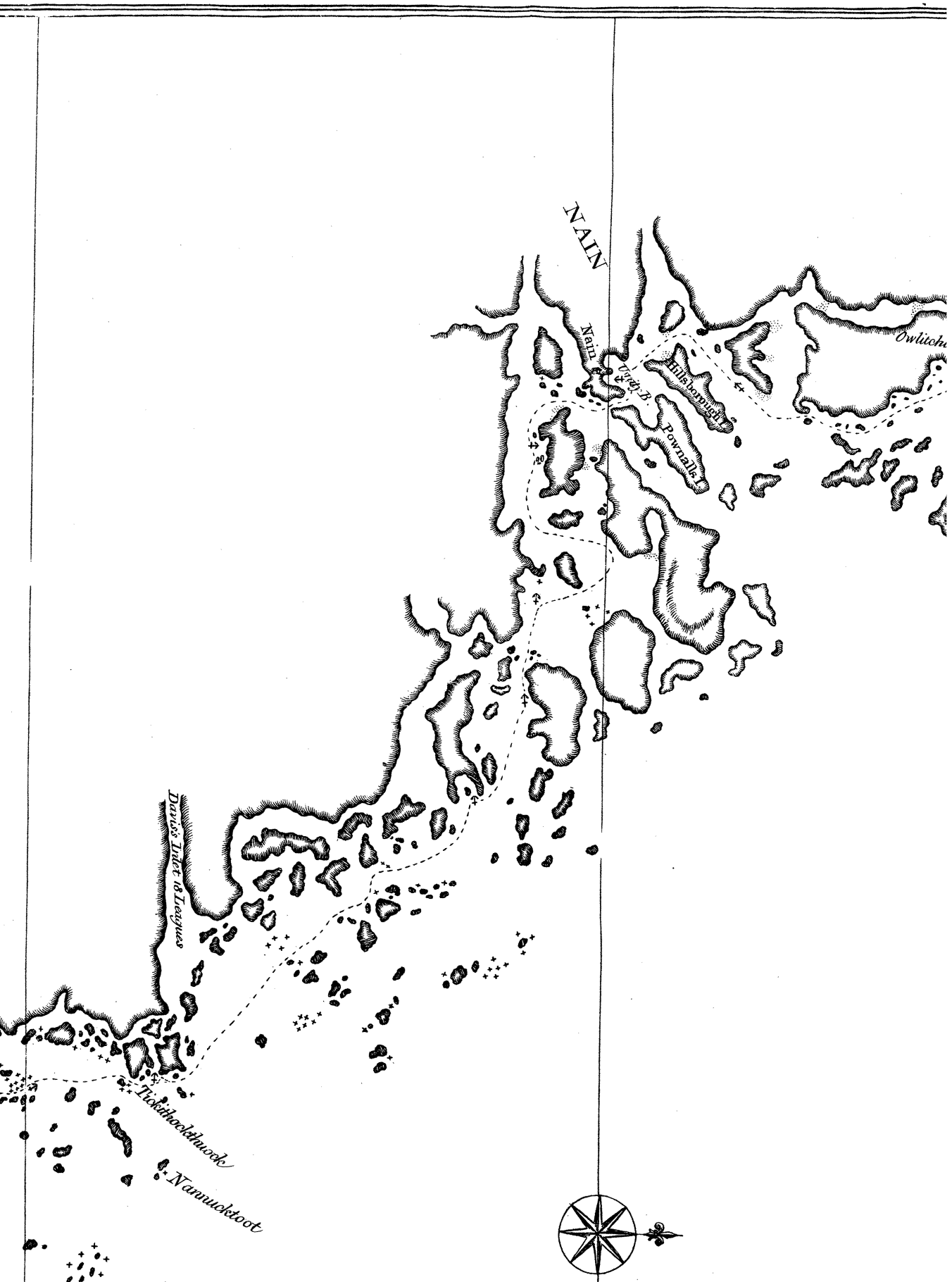
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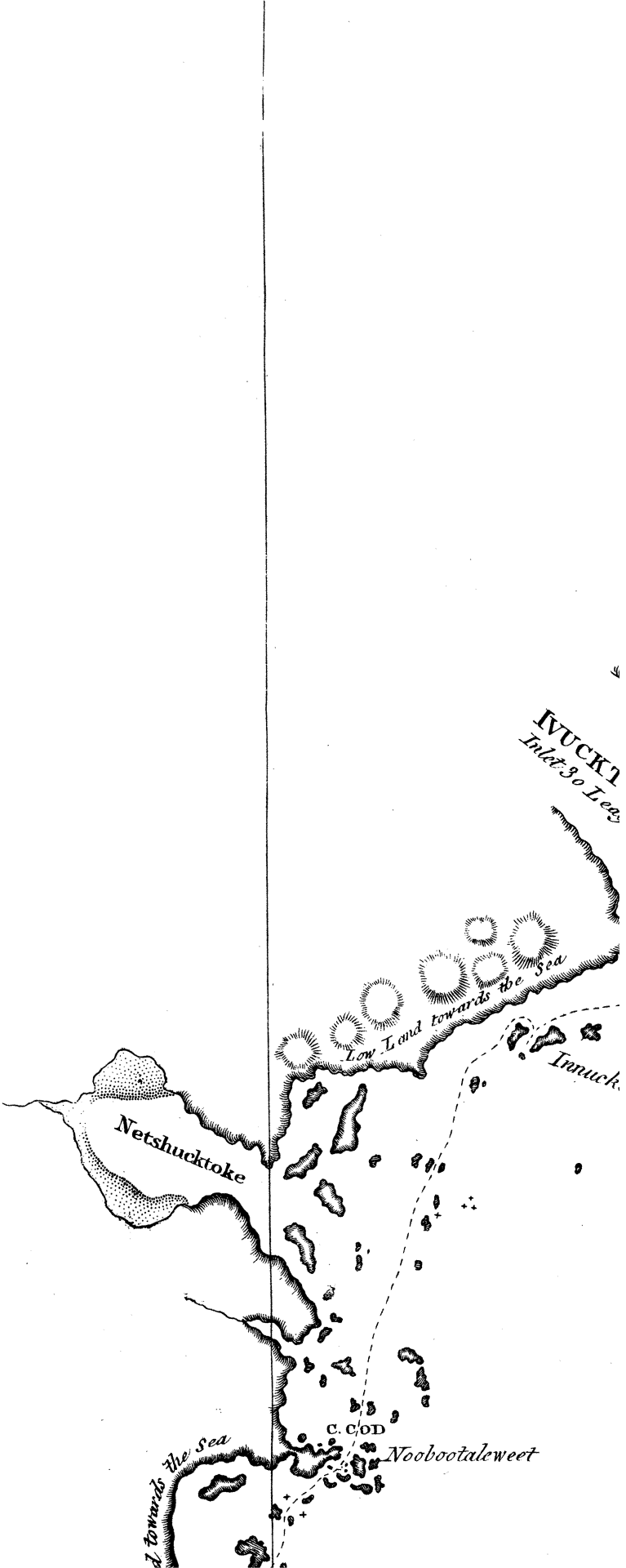
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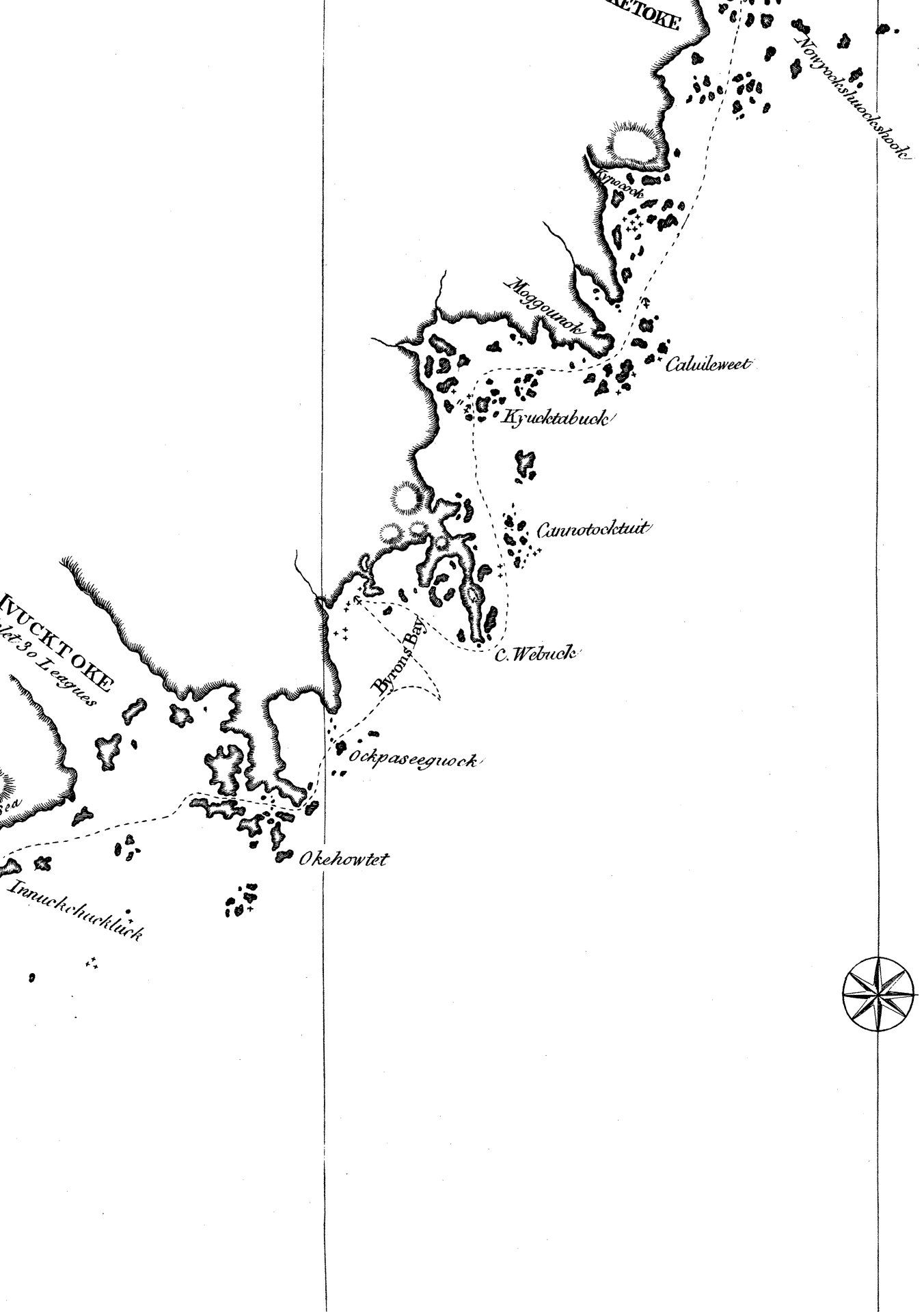
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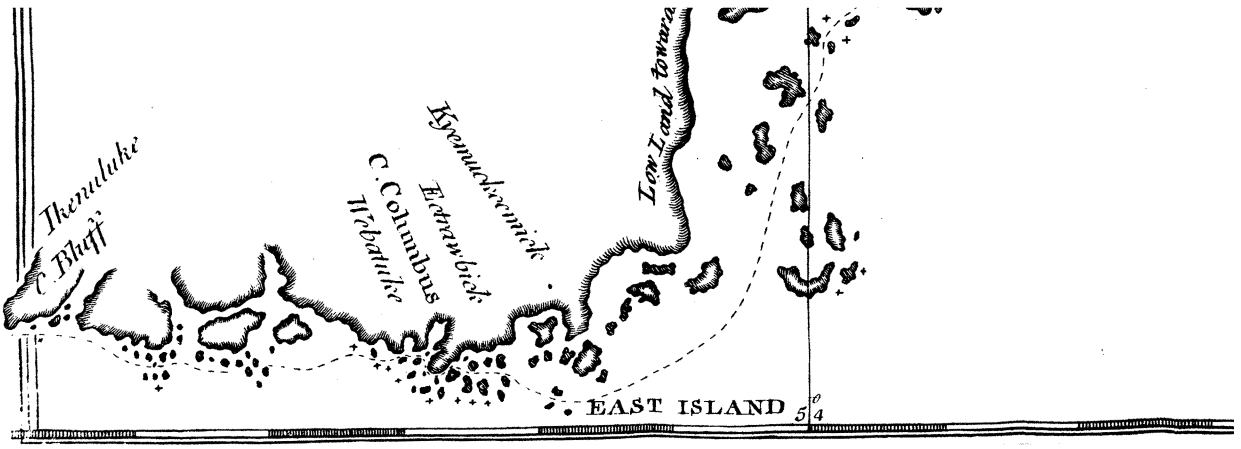
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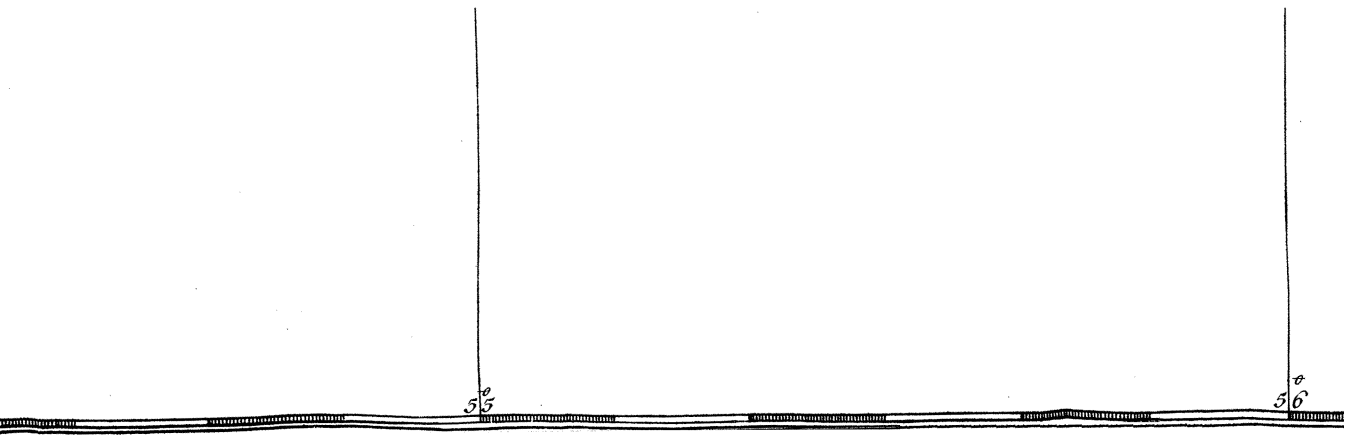
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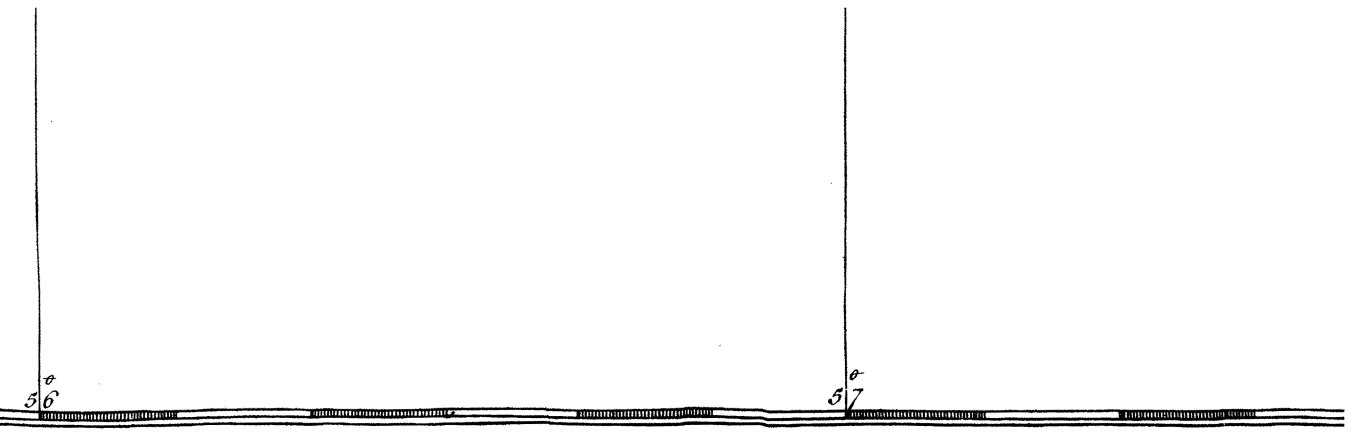
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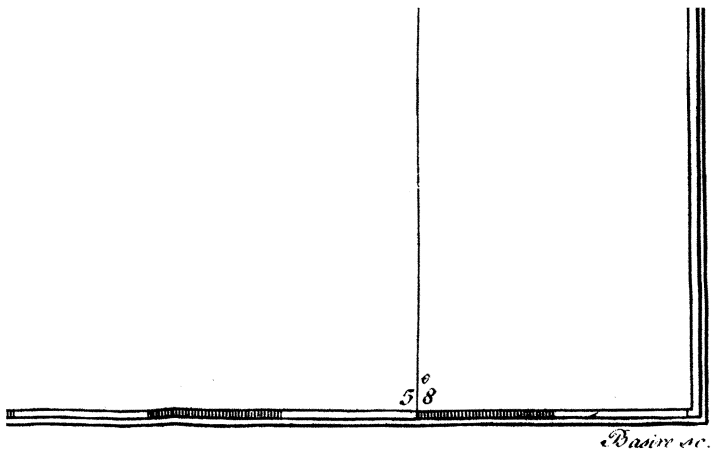
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early in marriage, frequently ſeveral years before conſummation; and the reaſon of this is, becauſe the girl's father, by that means, has one leſs in family to provide for.

The Eſquimeaux men are extremely indolent; and the women are the greateſt drudges upon the face of the earth. They do every thing except procure food, and even in that they are frequently aſſiſtants; ſo that they are at continual labour. They ſew with the ſinews of deer, and their needle-work is amazingly neat.

Their language is the ſame as the Greenlanders. It is not altogether devoid of harmony, and the women have very delicate voices.

Theſe Indians are ſtrangers to jealouſy; they do not appear to be at all quarrelſome, and they very ſeldom ſteal from one another. They do not ſeem very paſſionate; but woe be to the woman that offends her huſband.

If polygamy was not allowed among them, their numbers would be very few. Some of the women bear many children; but, in general, they are by no means fruitful. The wives live happily together; and, if deſerving, ſhare equally in their huſband's favours.

They have but few diſeaſes among them, and conſequently are without phyſicians; they believe, that tying to their neck or wriſts the particular part of ſome fiſh or animal, according to the complaint, will produce a cure. The moſt dreadful malady upon earth, has not as yet reached them: nor have they ever been viſited by the ſmall pox.

Theſe Indians cannot reckon numerically beyond ſix; and their compound numbers reach no farther than twenty-one. Every thing beyond is a multitude.

They live always upon the ſea-ſhores, from their dread of the Mountaineers. Their canoes contain only one perſon; they are extremely long in proportion to their breadth, being upwards of twenty feet by two; they are covered with ſkins, and are extremely light, ſo that they are overſet with the leaſt inclination to one ſide or the other. It is really a very extraordinary circumſtance, that though theſe people are almoſt ever in their canoes, which are ſo exceſſively tickliſh, there is not one among them that can ſwim.

They navigate their ſhallops without a compaſs in the thickeſt fogs, and are very good coaſters. They have always a vaſt number of dogs in their camp, which are of ſeveral uſes. Theſe animals ſerve as a guard; they are food; their ſkins are valuable for cloathing; and they draw their ſledges in winter. They have not the power of barking, but their howl is hideous; they are large, and have a head like a fox, whereas the dogs of the Mountaineers are extremely ſmall. The Samojedes and the Laplanders train the rein-deer to their ſledges. The country of Labradore produces theſe animals; but they are only ſerviceable to the Eſquimeaux for food and raiment.

The weapons of theſe Indians are, the dart and the bow and arrow. They are not very expert in the uſe of either; although it is with theſe they defend

ſend themſelves, and procure the neceſſaries of life.

Of their NUMBERS.

This is a calculation not eaſily formed. I have been at ſome pains to obtain information upon this head; and by the means which I ſhall purſue, of their populouſneſs one may be able to make a tolerable eſtimation.

Leaving the ſtraights of Belleiſle, and proceeding northwards, the firſt tribe, or ſettlement, you come to, is that of Ogbuctoke. Here they have the moſt boats, by reaſon of their being neareſt to the Europeans; and allowing fifteen perſons to each boat, including men, women, and children, which is rather an under-rating, the boats being eighteen, the number of this tribe will be, 270

The next tribe is at Nonynoke, where the Moravians are ſettled. Theſe have only five boats; but then they are more crouded, ſo admitting twenty to a boat their number is, 100

Keewedloke is the ſeat of the next tribe. Here they have no more than ſix boats; yet notwithſtanding, they are the largeſt tribe upon the coaſt. My Indian imagined them to be one third more numerous than the Ogbucktoke tribe, ſo that they amount to about 360

Nepawktoot, 70

800

Brought over,	800
Cannuklookthuock, nearly equal to Keewedloke, ſuppoſe,	345
Chuckluck, about	140
Chuckbelweet,	40
Noolatucktoke,	30
Nuckvauk,	60

Hitherto, as I was myſelf no farther than Keewedloke, I have been guided in my computation by the Indian that accompanied me; but he having never been beyond Nuckvauk, imagines, by what he has heard related, that at the following places, which are all the ſettlements he has ever heard of, there may be at each, upon an average, about thirty:

Cummucktobick,	30
Kidlenock,	30
Toogeat,	30
Congerbaw,	30
Ungabaw,	30
Ivevucktoke,	30
Igloo-ockſhook,	30
	1623

If this calculation comes any thing near the truth, the ESQUIMEAUX inhabitants of LABRADORE are far from being numerous; and thoſe ſavages who inhabit the inland parts are ſtill leſs populous.

A

CHART

of part of the Country of

LABRADOR.

Taken by order of Commodore Shuldham,
in a Tour up the Coast in the Year 1773.

By

Lieutenant Roger Curtis.

N.B. the pricked line denotes Mr Curtis's track up the Coast, but the same passage must not be attempted by a Ship of burden.

NAIN

Kiglapeit

Outichiwick

Nannuckdeuck

OGHUCKTOKE

Inlet 20 Leagues

Canuckdeuckdeuck

Inlet 18 Leagues

CANYKETOKE

Nannuckdeuck

Mogpaumuk

Caluideweet

Kyucktabuck

Cannotocktuit

C. Webuck

IVUCKTOKE

Inlet 30 Leagues

Byrons Bay

Ockpaseeguck

Okehowtet

Low Land towards the Sea

Innuckshuckluck

Netshucktoke

C. COD

Noobootaleweet

Low Land towards the Sea

Thenaluke

C. Bluff

Kyennuckcanuck

Eyeenenbuck

C. Columbus

Wichattuke

EAST ISLAND

Baker sc.